

# THE INDIAN DRUM

By William MacHarg and Edwin Balmer

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## CHAPTER XIII.

—11—

### The Owner of the Watch.

"So they got word to you?" Constance exclaimed; she seemed still confused. "Oh, no—of course they couldn't have done that! They've hardly got my letter yet."

"Your letter?" Alan asked. "I wrote to Blue Rapids," she explained. "Some things came—they were sent to me. Some things of Uncle Benny's which were meant for you instead of me."

"You mean you've heard from him?"

"No—not that."

"What things, Miss Sherrill?"

"A watch of his and some coins and—a ring." She did not explain the significance of those things, and he could not tell from her mere enumeration of them and without seeing them that they furnished proof that his father was dead. She could not inform him of that, she felt, just here and now.

"I'll tell you about that later. You—you were coming to Harbor Point to see us?"

He colored. "I'm afraid not. I got as near as this to you because there is a man—an Indian—I have to see."

"An Indian? What is his name?"

"You see, I know quite a lot of them."

"Jo Pappo?"

She shook her head. "No; I don't know him."

She found a spot where the moss was covered with dry pine needles and sat down upon the ground.

"Sit down," she invited. "I want you to tell me what you have been doing."

"I've been on the boats." He dropped down upon the moss beside her. "Until yesterday I was a not very highly honored member of the crew of the package freighter *Oscoda*; I left her at Frankfort and came up here."

"Is Wassagum with you?"

"He wasn't on the *Oscoda*; but he was with me at first. Now, I believe, he has gone back to his own people—to Middle Village."

"You mean you've been looking for Mr. Corvet in that way?"

"Not exactly that." He hesitated; but he could see no reason for not telling what he had been doing. He had not so much hidden from her and her father what he had found in Benjamin Corvet's house; rather, he had refrained from mentioning it in his notes to them when he left Chicago because he had thought that the lists would lead to an immediate explanation; they had not led to that, but only to a suggestion, indefinite yet. He had known that, if his search finally developed nothing more than it had, he must at last consult Sherrill and get Sherrill's aid.

"We found some writing, Miss Sherrill," he said, "in the house on Aster street that night after Luke came."

"What writing?"

"He took the lists from his pocket and showed them to her. She separated and looked through the sheets and read the names written in the same hand that had written the directions upon the slip of paper that came to her four days before, with the things from Uncle Benny's pockets."

"My father had kept these very secretly," he explained. "He had them hidden. Wassagum knew where they were, and that night after Luke was dead and you had gone home, he gave them to me."

"After I had gone home? Henry went back to see you that night; he

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"Nothing definite at all. None of them knew my father; they were only amazed to find that anyone in Chicago had known their names."

In her feeling for him, she had laid her hand upon his arm; now her fingers tightened to sudden tenseness. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"Oh, it is not definite yet—not clear!" She felt the bitterness in his tone. "They have not any of them been able to make it wholly clear to me. It is like a record that has been—blurred. These original names must have been written down by my father many years ago—many, most of those people, I think—are dead; some are nearly forgotten. The only thing that is fully plain is that in every case my inquiries have led me to those who have lost one, and sometimes more than one relative upon the lake."

Constance thrilled to a vague horror; it was not anything to which she could give definite reason. His tone quite as much as what he said was its cause. His experience plainly had been forcing him to bitterness against his father; and he did not know with certainty yet that his father was dead.

"You'll lunch with us, of course," she said to Alan, "and then go back with us to Harbor Point. It's a day's journey around the two bays; but we've a boat here."

He assented, and they went down to the water where the white and brown power yacht, with long, graceful lines, lay solemnly in the sunlight. A little boat took them out over the shimmering, smooth surface to the ship; sculls from a faraway freighter swept under the beautiful, burnished craft, causing it to roll lazily as they boarded it. A party of nearly a dozen men and girls with an older woman chaperoning them, lounged under the shade of an awning over the after-deck. They greeted her gaily and looked curiously at Alan as she introduced him.

"Have you worked on any of our boats?" she asked him, after luncheon had been finished, and the anchor of the ship had been raised.

A queer expression came upon his face. "I've thought it best not to do that, Miss Sherrill," he replied.

She did not know why the next moment she should think of Henry.

The yacht was pushing swiftly, smoothly, with hardly a hum from its motors, north along the shore. He watched intently the rolling, wooded hills and the ragged little bays and inlets. His work and his investigations had not brought him to the neighborhood before, but she found that she did not have to name the places to him; he knew them from the charts.

"Grand Traverse light," he said to her as a white tower showed upon their left. Then, leaving the shore, they pushed out across the wide mouth of the larger bay toward Little Traverse. He grew more silent as they approached it.

"It is up there, isn't it," he asked, pointing, "that they hear the Drum?"

"Yes; how did you know the place?"

"I don't know it exactly; I want you to show me."

She pointed out to him the cove, dark, primeval, blue in its contrast with the lighter green of the trees about it and the glistening white of the shingle and of the more distant sand bluffs. He leaned forward, staring at it, until the changed course of the yacht, as it swung about toward the entrance to the bay, obscured it.

"Seeing the ships made me feel that I belonged here on the lakes," he reminded her. "I have felt something—not recognition exactly, but something that was like the beginning of recognition—many times this summer when I saw certain places. It's like one of those dreams, you know, in which you are conscious of having had the same dream before. I feel that I ought to know this place."

They landed only a few hundred yards from the cottage. After bidding good-by to her friends, they went up to it together through the trees. There was a small sun room, rather shut off from the rest of the house, to which she led him. Leaving him there, she ran upstairs to get the things.

She halted an instant beside the door, with the box in her hands, before she went back to him, thinking how to prepare him against the significance of these relics of his father. She need not prepare him against the mere fact of his father's death; he had been beginning to believe that already; but these things must have far more meaning for him than merely that. She went in and put the box down upon the card table.

"The muffer in the box was your father's," she told him. "He had it on the day he disappeared. The other things," her voice choked a little, "are the things he must have had in his pockets. They've been lying in water and sand—"

He gazed at her. "I understand," he said after an instant. "You mean that they prove his death."

She assented gently, without speaking. As he approached the box, she drew back from it and slipped away into the next room. She walked up and down there, pressing her hands together. He must be looking at the things now, unrolling the muffer. What would he be feeling as

he saw them? Would he be glad, with that same gladness which had mingled with her own sorrow over Uncle Benny, that his father was gone—gone from his guilt and his fear and his disgrace? Or would he resent that death which thus left everything unexplained to him? He would be looking at the ring. That, at least, must bring more joy than grief to him. He would recognize that it must be his mother's wedding ring; if it told him that his mother must be dead, it would tell him that she had been married, or had believed that she was married."

Suddenly she heard him calling her. "Miss Sherrill!" his voice had a sharp thrill of excitement.

She hurried toward the sun room. She could see him through the doorway, bending over the card table with the things spread out upon its top in front of him.

"Yes."

He straightened; he was very pale. "Would coins that my father had in his pocket all have been more than twenty years old?"

She ran and bent beside him over the coins. "Twenty years!" she repeated. She was making out the date of the coins now herself; the markings were eroded, nearly gone in some instances, but in every case enough remained to make plain the date. "Eighteen-ninety—1894—1895," she made them out. Her voice husked queerly. "What does it mean?" she whispered.

He turned over and re-examined the articles with hands suddenly steady. "There are two sets of things here," he concluded. "The muffer and paper of directions—they belonged to my father. The other things—it isn't six months or less than six months that they've lain in sand and water to become worn like this; it's twenty years. My father can't have had these things; they were somewhere else, or some one else had them. He wrote his directions to that person—after June twelfth, he said, so it was before June twelfth he wrote it, but we can't tell how long before it might have been in February, when he disappeared; it might have been any time after that. But if the directions were written so long ago, why weren't the things sent to you before this? Didn't the person have the things then? Did we have to wait to get them? Or—was it the instructions to send them that he didn't have? Or, if he had the instructions, was he waiting to receive word when they were to be sent? You thought these things proved my father was dead. I think they prove he is alive! Oh, we must think this out!"

He paced up and down the room; she sank into a chair, watching him. "The first thing that we must do," he said suddenly, "is to find out about the watch. What is the phone number of the telephone office?"

She told him, and he went out to the telephone; she sprang up to follow him, but checked herself and merely waited until he came back.

"I've wired to Buffalo," he announced. "The Merchants' exchange, if it is still in existence, must have a record of the presentation of the watch."

"Then you'll stay here with us until an answer comes?"

"If we get a reply by tomorrow morning, I'll wait till then. If not, I'll ask you to forward it to me. I must see about the trains and get back to Frankfort. I can cross by boat from there to Manitowoc—that will be quickest. We must begin there, by trying to find out who sent the package."

She helped him put the muffer and the other articles into the box; she noticed that the wedding ring was no longer with them. He had taken that, then; it had meant to him all that she had known it must mean.

In the morning she was up very early; but Alan, the servants told her, had risen before she had and had gone out. The morning, after the cool northern night, was chill. She slipped a sweater on and went out on the veranda, looking about for him. An iridescent haze shrouded the hills and the bay; in it she heard a ship's bell strike twice; then another struck twice—then another and another—and another. The haze thinned as the sun grew warmer, showing the placid water of the bay on which the ships stood double. She saw Alan returning, and knowing from the direction from which he came that he must have been to the telephone office, she ran to meet him.

"Was there an answer?" he inquired eagerly.

He took a yellow telegraph sheet from his pocket and held it for her to read.

"Watch presented Captain Caleb Stafford, master of propeller freighter *Marvin Halch* for rescue of crew and passengers of sinking steamer *Winnebago* off Long point, Lake Erie."

She was breathing quickly in her excitement. "Caleb Stafford!" she exclaimed. "Why, that was Captain Stafford of Stafford and Ramsdell! They owned the *Miwaka*!"

"Yes," Alan said.

A great change had come over him since last night; he was under emotion so strong that he seemed scarcely to dare speak lest it master him—a leaping, exultant impulse it was, which he fought to keep down.

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"What is it, Alan?" she asked. "What is it about the *Miwaka*? You said you'd found some reference to it in Uncle Benny's house. What was it? What did you find there?"

"The man—" Alan swallowed and steadied himself and repeated—"The man I met in the house that night mentioned it. He seemed to think I was a ghost that had haunted Mr. Corvet—the ghost from the *Miwaka*; at least he shouted out to me that I couldn't save the *Miwaka*!"

"Save the *Miwaka*! What do you mean, Alan? The *Miwaka* was lost with all her people—officers and crew—no one knows how or where!"

"All except the one for whom the Drum didn't beat!"

"What's that? Blood pricked in her cheeks. "What do you mean, Alan?"

"I don't know yet; but I think I'll soon find out."

"No; you can tell me more now, Alan. Surely you can. I must know. I have the right to know. Yesterday, even before you found out about this, you knew things you weren't telling me—things about the people you'd been seeing. They'd all lost people on the lakes, you said; but you found out more than that."

"They'd all lost people on the *Miwaka*!" he said. "All who could tell me where their people were lost; a

few were like Jo Pappo we saw yesterday, who knew only the year his father was lost; but the time always was the time that the *Miwaka* disappeared!"

"Disappeared!" she repeated. Her veins were prickling cold. What did he know, what could any one know of the *Miwaka*, the ship of which nothing ever was heard except the beating of the Indian Drum? She tried to make him say more; but he looked away now down to the lake.

"The Chippewa must have come in early this morning," he said. "She's lying in the harbor; I saw her on my way to the telephone office. If Mr. Spearman has come back with her, tell him I'm sorry I can't wait to see him."